

THE expected threat of cup fighters Tilbury just never materialised on Saturday as Wycombe Wanderers turned on their best performance of the season to go racing into the second preliminary round of the F.A. Cup and a home tie with either Farnborough or Woking.

Spartan League leaders Farnborough held their senior opponents to a 2-2 draw on Saturday and Wycombe will have to wait until tomorrow (Wednesday) to see who they will be meeting in the next round.

Whichever club it is, however, should be of little consequence to Wanderers — if they play anything like as well as Saturday. This was Wycombe at their best and the decisive victory showed their true character.

This game, described by manager Brian Lee as the most difficult cup-tie he had faced at Wycombe, was full of pit-falls. Tilbury, riding high in division two of the Rothmans Isthmian League, were a side very much on the up, full of enthusiasm and just itching to put one over their division one opponents. On top of that Wycombe hadn't played at St. Chads Road before and were trying to get over a severe 4-1 week mauling at Walton and Hershham.

The stage was therefore set for Wycombe's downfall. But their answer to it all was quick and decisive. Steve Perrin was recalled to the side while John Maskell returned after a six match absence through injury, and these two players made all the difference.

The Blues' attack, lacking good service in recent games, looked much sharper while Perrin's presence took much of the weight off Keith Searle and Tony Horseman. Perrin, who took a long time to get into his stride at the start of the season, put in a tremendous performance, hitting the post once and making the second goal.

Goalkeeper Maskell also made a real difference. Although he had a comparatively easy time, his greater understanding with the back four was clearly evident and consequently the defence looked much more sound.

It is a little unfair to pick out individuals in what was essentially a team performance but the way Mick Holfield took his two goals must be mentioned. Only a player with real confidence would have scored the first — a superb effort from just inside the area.

In defence Dave Bullock was back to his commanding best while Phil Wood enjoyed his finest game to date.

What of Tilbury? For a side leading the second division with only one defeat behind them, they looked poor and were powerless against a Wycombe side that never gave them an inch to work in. The all-important midfield battle was soon over, with Wanderers the victors.

Although Wanderers were pressing constantly a goal was not forthcoming. Mick Holfield, however, changed all that in the 20th minute. Searle laid off a long ball from midfield to Holfield running in at full stretch. Mick pushed the ball on and fired in a scaring shot right into the top

By STUART EARP; Tilbury 0, Wycombe Wanderers 3

The "Dockers" spearhead of Mal Harkins and Joe Dunwell were given a hard time all afternoon while at the other end, Keith Searle, showing admirable temperament, generally got the better of 6ft. 3in. centre-back Norman Welch.

From the opening whistle Wanderers looked to be a side full of confidence, stringing passes together well and starving Tilbury of possession. Pritchard almost broke through after eight minutes and then two quick corners forced Tilbury back on their heels.

corner of the net. Home keeper Steve Benson did well to get his fingers to the ball but the sheer speed of the shot beat him.

Tilbury were well and truly rattled by this reverse and went from bad to worse two minutes later when Perrin all but put Wanderers two up. The big striker picked up possession outside the box, switched the ball onto his right foot and curled in a powerful drive which beat Benson all the way. It looked a certain goal until the ball thudded against the foot of the upright and was hastily cleared.

The first real reply from Tilbury didn't come until the 25th minute when a series of delicate passes by John Mellish and Harkins broke through the defence. Mellish's shot, however, was too weak and Maskell, playing with a strapped thumb, was able to save comfortably.

It was a rare attack, however, and Wycombe were soon holding the initiative once more. Pritchard forced another corner after 27 minutes which culminated with Dave Bullock bending a shot just past the post.

Two minutes later Tony Horseman brought a great save from Benson after a goalmouth mêlée. "Bodger" deflected the ball towards the far post from eight yards only to see Benson dive full length and save on the line.

The elusive second goal had to

where Perrin darted in and powered a header against the fortunate Benson's legs. The ball fell loose for a second, which was long enough for Holfield to fling himself at the ball and force it home.

Still no reply came from Tilbury. Their attacks were monotonously broken down by the visitors' defence and just to emphasise their first half supremacy, Wanderers chalked up another couple of corners in the few minutes before half-time.

Just how much Wanderers had been helped by a strong wind in the first half remained to be seen when the teams turned round. After only four minutes Tilbury wasted a golden chance to reduce the leeway. Caught square, Wanderers' back four were completely split by Dunwell's shrewd through-ball that brought Maskell off his line. Harkins, faced only by a gaping net, had enough time to score twice but Dave Bullock raced across to save the day, whipping the ball off the striker's toes with a sliding tackle.

It was the first time Wycombe had been subjected to real pressure in the game and ten minutes later Tilbury wasted another good chance. Harkins put Tommy Lee through inside the area but he fired well over the top as Maskell came out to narrow the angle.

Two chances were therefore wasted, two chances that were vital if Tilbury were to make any impression. As it was, Wycombe raised their game and once again took control.

The crucial third goal that put the match beyond Tilbury's reach came against the run of play in the 66th minute. Again it was a tribute to Wycombe's teamwork. Bullock's long free-kick was perfectly laid off by Perrin, to Gambin, once again up with the attack. His first cross was blocked but he slung over the rebound left-footed into the area. Keith Searle, lurking dangerously, met the ball first time and flicked his shot well wide of the 'keeper and into the net.

The goal probably gave Keith more satisfaction than several of his more spectacular efforts, for he was given a really rough time by the Dockers' centre-half Welch, who was lucky not to be booked for several ugly tackles on the centre-forward.

It was a killer blow to Tilbury who rapidly deteriorated. Even the most simple passes went astray as the visitors' defence whittled down their attacks and even a free-kick about seven yards from the Wycombe net was wasted, the 11-man wall effectively blocking the shot.

The substitution of Burns for Russell made little difference to the home side, who had long before given up the ghost.

TILBURY: S. Benson, F. H. Russell (sub. M. Burns 80 mins.), I. Commons, L. Lee, N. Welch, A. Dring, J. Mellish, A. Prima, M. Harkins, G. Bradley, J. Dunwell.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; D. Gambin, P. Wood, D. Bullock, R. Grant, R. Williams, L. Pritchard, M. Holfield; A. Horseman, K. Searle, S. Perrin. Sub.: I. Rundle (not used).

Referee: B. Allan (Greenford).
Half-time: 2-0. **Goalscorers:** Wycombe — Holfield 2 (20, 66), Searle (66).
Attendance: 856.